

DNR Migratory Gamebird Committee meeting November 6, 2017

Attendance:

Taylor Finger (WDNR), Trenton Rohrer (WDNR), Bill Hirt (WDNR- WCD), Tyler Strelow (WDNR - LE), Brenda Kelly (WDNR), Josh Martinez (WDNR), Drew Hawley (WDNR), Peter David (GLIFWC), Don Kirby (WI Waterfowl Association), Brian Glenzinski (Ducks Unlimited), John Wetzel (WI Wildlife Federation), Mark Kakatsch (WI Wildlife Federation), Greg Kidd (NRCS), Greg Egan (Hunters Rights Coalition)

Updates from around the state:

Mead Wildlife area- Bill Hirt

- Best production in 15 years
- Strong numbers before opener, appx. 50 youth hunters averaged 4 ducks in the bag
- Opener hunter numbers around 465 hunters
- Low water for opener due to structure failures
- Water levels have come up and they are seeing lots of mallards using property now
- One of the earliest freeze over Bill has seen in his time at mead
- Lots of cranes and geese on the property now

Mississippi- Brenda Kelly, Greg Egan, John Wetzel, Tyler Strelow

- Spring summer went well, river had good water levels throughout spring, summer, and fall
- Wild rice crop was good
- Early teal season went good based on contacts. It was the 1st season where good review outweighed the bad on the river.
- Regular opener saw people still shooting limits of teal. Good time had by all and very few complaints
- Bird numbers good, the divers are in and they are seeing a lot of Ring-necked ducks

Horicon- Mark Kakatsch, Paul Samerdyke notes

- Teal season nonexistent but had average participation
- Basically, no Blue winged teal on property mostly just Green-winged teal early.
- Opener saw lots of teal and wood duck the 1st week of hunting was great
- Harvest is believed to be up from the average
- Pintails, Wigeon, Green-winged teal and Gadwall numbers were up this year
- Canada goose use of refuge is down to no more than 10,000 birds. Used to be 25,000 to 30,000 this time of year.

Green Bay/NE- Josh Martinez

- Production was good this year with strong Wood duck numbers
- High water all year and above avg water on green bay
- There was good number of teal in the lower bay area during teal season
- 11/3 flight showed scaup numbers on the bay at around 40,000
- Flights were flown 2 miles from shore and he believes use by Canvasbacks is up

Crex- Drew Hawley

- Good mallard and wood duck production
- High water in Crex throughout spring and summer
- Lots of teal for teal season but few hunters. Most of the Teal were gone before regular duck season opener
- Opening day hunter numbers down
- Crex is pretty frozen now

- Read there was a huge migration of Ringed-neck ducks in up in Northern MN we are probably seeing those now on the river
- Coming up a ¼ of our wardens will have less than 3 years of experience Must be doing good things due to our strong classes of warden candidates

Peter David (GLIFWC)

- Wild rice crop lousy in NE but average to below average in NW
- MN harvest was great
- Weak flight of birds in Chequamegon Bay compared to past years

Don Kirby WWA

- Wood duck huge opportunity this year. He has seen them still around in the snow
- Water levels high on Green Bay lots of spots he used to walk to he can drive his boat over now

Brian Glenzinski- Ducks Unlimited

- Like everyone else reported mixed bags are huge this year in Wisconsin
- Good production
- Lots of birds in Wisconsin. It's a good year to be a duck hunter here.

Greg Kidd NRCS

- Paradise marsh had 70 cars in parking lot on opening day
- Their funding looks like it will be equal to what they have gotten in past years

Taylor presented on a number of topics such as:

- How we did on our banding quotas
 - Exceeded or came close in all areas
 - Mallards-4051/4000
 - Wood ducks 1346/1500
 - Canada Geese 4344/4100
- Banding Training for staff in 2018
- How the 4th year of the Early Teal season went and the next steps of the process
- 2017 duck hunters survey is going out this year and results will be posted from past by March of 2018
- Wisconsin Waterfowl strategic plan will begin being written this year looking for partners for input
- Conservation Congress issues
 - **Resolution: 460117**-enact a spring conservation order light goose season
 - **Resolution: 460117**- WCC not support legislation to establish a Sandhill crane hunting season

- **Resolution: 460117**-*Educate potential Sandhill crane hunters on penalties for shooting whooping cranes*
- **Resolution: 090517**-*Extend north zone waterfowl hunting opportunity with a split season*
- Rules being Implemented
 - Goose registration no longer required and currently working on ways to collect harvest information
- Canada Goose Management
 - Early season Estimate is around 19000 geese harvested which is up from last year.
 - See a 50/50 split of Ontario nesting birds and local giants making up our harvest
 - Taylor proposed the potential Removal Horicon Goose Zone and asked for input
 - John Wetzel- not doing anything, not worth keeping around, do not remove Horicon zone and go to 3 birds at same time
 - Mark Kakatsch-increase bag? Only around for nostalgia anyways, only 10,000 geese in refuge used to be 24,000 at same time
 - Overall feedback was “It’s not useful, can’t monitor harvest, get rid of it “rip the Band-Aid off””
- Mississippi flyway issues
 - SRC approved operational status of teal season
 - Alabama to have Sandhill crane season by 2019, Michigan is starting process to get a sandhill crane season
 - Informed group about Michigan and status of crane hunting season proposal
 - General swan season EA sent by USFWS
 - Update on issue and reasons for joint recommendation for different alternative than that suggested by USFWS
 - Peter David 2017 Tribal regulations proposed but still not yet approved by Feds
 - Provided feedback from tribal perspective on Wisconsin’s comment letter regarding tribal waterfowl season proposals

Miss river surveys- Brenda Kelly

- The first survey was flown last week 11/30-11/3
- Will have a summary hopefully by Mid-week 11/8 posted online
 - The first flight was scheduled beginning of October but didn’t work out had lots of complications from equipment breakdowns, busy schedules, and bad weather
- Next 2 flights scheduled for
 - 15-November
 - 31-November

- Group Discussion
 - Taylor asked if there are better ways for collection of Public Input
 - Don Kirby-Send a recorder to record input to different venues, conferences, etc.
 - Don Kirby-Places to try and get input would be things like the Milwaukee sport show, Wausau sports show, Deer and turkey expo, Eau Claire, other outreach tools
 - Brenda Kelly-During March people busy, don't think they are heard at traditional public hearings
 - Taylor Finger- Find new venues, 80% of people who show up are the same people every year
 - Mark Kakatsch-Current way is old and stale
 - Expand legal ways to get information
 - Greg Egan-Uneducated people making uneducated decisions without hearing our presentations about why things are the way they are
 - Don Kirby- 1-2 nights talk to them talk about regulations at these different venues

Staff and Members brought up importance of Spring Surveys/other surveys

Taylor Finger- Loss of some aerial observers in coming years to burn teams or job turnover

- Brenda Kelly, Josh Martinez-Need a list of aerial trained observers, build list of trained observers in case of emergency or for other flights taking place
- Need to be better at surveys
- DNR Staff- If we drop infrastructure work, we need to pick up surveys for better management
- Need to Put more people through trainings
- Can we have volunteers fly – Bryan Glenzinski.